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ABSTRACT

The goal of this primary level teaching unit on the folklore of the Miwok Indians, who once lived in the foothills not far from Yosemite Valley, is to develop in the child academic skills which can be observed and/or measured. The four objectives are that: after hearing the folktale, "How the Great Rocks Grew," which tells how two rocks grew in the Sierra Mountains, the child will be able to tell it to the class or to the teacher and will be able to identify the main plot or theme, the characters in proper sequence, and the moral of the story: after further study of the Miwoks, the child will be able to identify the ethnic group from which the folktale originates: he will be able to demonstrate his knowledge of vocabulary which was developed in the story: and he will be able to relate to the folktale in creative ways through art, music, and dramatic play. Activities are itemized in each of four study areas: language arts, art, music, and math/science. For instance, the music teacher could, with the help of the children, compose a "Honuk, honuk" song which the Inchworm might have sung: have children listen to some Native American rhythms and encourage them to develop their own creative movements to the music: and help the class develop a ballet using the characters of the story. A bibliography on Miwok Indians is included. (Author/AN)

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FOLKLORE OF THE MIWOK INDIANS

(A Primary Unit Based on a Miwok Folktale)

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

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TED 7982

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FOLKLORE OF THE MIWOK INDIANS

GOAL: Through the development of folklore of the Miwok Indians the child will develop academic skills which can be observed and/or measured.

OBJECTIVES:

1. After hearing the folktale, How the Great Rocks Grew, the child will be able to tell it to the class or to the teacher. He will be able to identify the main plot or theme, the characters in proper sequence, and the moral of the story.

2. The child will be able with further study of the Miwoks be able to identify the ethnic group from which the folktale originates.

3. The child will be able to demonstrate his knowledge of vocabulary which was developed in the story.

4. To relate to the folktale in creative ways through art, music and dramatic play.

*Fischer, Anne B., Stories California Indians Told, Parnassus Press, Berkeley, CA, 1957, Page 10

HOW THE GREAT ROCKS GREW

The Miwok Indians lived in the foothills not far from Yosemite Valley. Miwok means Little Grizzly Bear in our language.

The Miwoks told this story of how two great rocks grew in the Sierra Mountains.

Long ago, when Eagle was chief over all, two Miwok boys went swimming with two Miwok girls in a pool.

"This water is warm. We like it," said the girls.

The boys didn't agree with the girls.

"Brrr--this water is cold!" they cried, and shivered. "We're going to sun ourselves on those two nice warm rocks over there!"

The rocks warmed by the sun made the boys sleepy. They slept so hard they didn't even hear the girls laughing and talking nearby.

Then a strange thing happened while those two boys slept. Slowly and silently the rocks began to grow higher and higher.

The day passed and the rocks went on growing taller and taller with the boys on the very top.

The girls were having such a good time in the water they forgot about the two boys who had gone off by themselves.

When sunset came the girls were ready to go back home to the village. They remembered the two boys then and looked for them.

No boys. But where the small rocks and the boys had been were two huge rocks like gray walls that towered up into the clouds.

"Where are you, boys?" the girls called.

No answer came.

They kept on calling and calling, but there was still no answer. Dusk was coming and the girls frew afraid out there alone between those silent, giant rocks.

They ran all the way home to tell their fathers and mothers what had happened.

People from the Umne, the Indian village, came down to the river and saw the giant rocks. They realized the boys were up on top hidden by the clouds but they didn't know how to get them down.

They tried and tried to climb up. There was now way to get a fingerhold or a toehold on the smooth walls.

Then Mouse squeaked, "Maybe I can stick my claws in and pull myself up to where the boys are."

"You." The people sniffed and sniffed, making fun of Mouse. "You're too little."

However, they were afraid for their boys up there, alone and hungry and cold in the dark. They decided to let Mouse try.

Brave little Mouse dug his claws in and tried his hardest. Slowly he pulled himself up, a little at a time. He had gone about as high as a man is tall when his legs grew weak and then he reached a place where the rock was very slippery.

"Plop!" He came down and landed on the earth below.

The people laughed and Mouse went away to rub his bumped head and body with his sore paws.

"I'm bigger than Mouse," said Rat. "I'll try."

He was a very big fat Rat. He started out well, but soon went "PUFF,PUFF, PUFF."

Soon the "PUFF,PUFF" came faster and faster. He lost his breath.

"Plumph!" He fell to earth with a louder thump than Mouse had made. He bared his sharp teeth at the people when he got to his feet, so they didn't dare laugh at thim. He went off alone in the dark.

Mountain Lion came up then, without making a sound. "I can jump," he bragged, "I'll jump up and get those boys for you."

Mountain Lion seemed so sure he could jump to the top of the rocks, the people believed maybe he could get their boys for them.

"Try, please try," they begged Mountain Lion.

Mountain Lion went off and practiced his springs to limber up his legs.

"Now," he shouted to the people, "get out of the way." "I need room to run and spring if you want me to jump high enough to reach those boys."

The people moved away to give Mountain Lion room to jump and run.

He ran, then paused, leaned back on his hind legs, stiffened them suddenly and took a great leap into the air.

He went high on the mountain wall, but he bounced right back like a ball and landed in the river with a loud splash. Wet and cold, he padded silently away into the night, his tail between his legs.

At last Eagle had an idea. "Let's ask Measuring Worm." He is a famous climber."

The people thought Measuring Worm was very small to try to rescue the boys - being only as long as one joint in a finger. But Eagle was chief and had ways of doing things people didn't know about.

Eagle sent first for a sack of money, strings of shell disks called Humna. He gave the Humna to Dove and sent Dove to get Measuring Worm who lived with his wife in a little house down by the river's edge.

Dove told Measuring Worm about the boys and held out the sack of Humna.

"Will you come and rescue them?" Dove asked.

Measuring Worm shook his head in doubt. "I'm too old to try. I'm not as strong as I was when I was young."

"But Eagle says you are famous as a climber," Dove insisted. "Please come."

"Well, I'll come and see,," Measuring Worm promised, "but I'm too old."

Dove flew right back. "Measuring Worm is coming," he called out.

The people stayed there in the dark and waited a long time. Finally, Measuring Worm came hobbling slowly along the path, leaning on a stick.

As he came closer, his step was slower and more shaky. He leaned harder on his cane and stopped for breath. He had a net sack on his back.

Measuring Worm took a long time to look at the rocks and feel them. "They are much to high and too smooth for such an old man to climb," he grumbled. "But I'll try, I'll try." His voice sounded very weak and shaky.

Slowly, with trembling hands he tied the carrying net around his waist and started up the nearest rock. As he climbed inch by inch up the rock he sang his own name softly over and over.

"Honuk, honuk, Honuk, honuk."

"Will he be strong enough to reach the top?" the people wondered aloud as the "Honuk, honuk" grew fainter and fainter to their ears.

At last Measuring Worm reached the top of the rock and found one of the boys. Over on the rock across the way was the other boy.

"How did you get up here?" he asked the boy beside him.

The boy was too worn out to answer.

The rocks were so far apart that Measuring Worm could not get from one rock to the other. He could take only one boy down at a time.

He spread out his net, put the first boy into it, and slowly climbed down.

"Honuk, honuk," he sang over and over just as he had done coming up.

Finally the people down below heard the song. It grew louder and louder as Measuring Worm came creeping down. The Indians were very happy when he arrived with one boy.

Measuring Worm sat down and fanned himself and fluttered his eyelids and complained of being weary. Then he sighed.

"Now I have to go back after the other boy and I'm tired and old," he grumbled. "But I'll try, I'll try."

With that, the father and mother of the boy who was still up on the rock ran home and got a bag of Humna and brought it to Measuring Worm. The father and mother of the boy who had been rescued gave him Humna too.

After a rest, Measuring Worm started off again singing and inching up the rock. After a long time he came back with the second boy.

The people and the parents of the boys were very grateful to Measuring Worm. They all brought him presents. They gave him more Humna. They took turns brushing his back. They tried everything they knew to cure his weakness and lameness.

"You are the only one who was skillful enough to climb the rock. You saved our boys,"they told him.

Measuring Worm put his bag of shell disk money and presents into his net bag and tottered away on his cane - back home to his wife.

When he got out of sight of the people he walked faster. Finally he threw away his cane and walked very fast.

He was not old at all! He just pretended to be old and weak!

He showed his wife all the presents and money and told her how he had brought the boys down in his net.

"All kinds of animals bragged and wanted to bring those boys down," he told her. "I, Measuring Worm, am little but I was the only one who could do it.

The two great rocks that carried the sleepy Indian boys into the sky stand even now in Yosemite Valley.

ACTIVITIES

I. Language Arts

a. Read story How the Great Rocks Grew. Let a small group dramatize story.

b. Make flannel board pictures of the characters of the story. Let children narrate the story using the flannel-backed picture.

c. Write vocabulary words on the blackboard. Have children write them on individual chalk boards or on paper.

d. Play make a sentence game with the children, using words from the story.

II. Art

a. Have children make a large mural about the story.

b. Make papier mache models of the animals in the story, such as Mouse, Rat, Inchworm and Mountain Lion.

c. Make finger puppets of the characters and have a puppet show.

d. Collect rocks and paint them various colors.

III. Music

a. With the help of the children compose a Honuk, honuk song which the Inchworm might have sung.

b. Have children listen to some Native American rhythms. Encourage them to develop their own creative movements to the music.

c. Help class to develop a ballet using the characters of the story.

IV. Math/Science

a. Discuss with the children that the number four has a special meaning in the folklore of the Miwok Indians. Some math activities can evolve from that idea are:
   1. Four time four, etc.
   2. Four plus four, etc.
   3. Four minus four, etc.
   4. Introduce Roman Numeral IV.

b. Give children rulers and narrow strips of paper or cardboard. Show them an inch on the ruler. Let the children practice measuring inches on the cardboard. Discuss the fact that Inchworm is as long as an inch.

c. Have children count the characters in the story.

d. Collect books about rocks and discuss the real origin of rocks.

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